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Air Battle Force: Air Force Support for Contingency Operations

A Monograph
by

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ABSTRACT

AIR BATTLE FORCE: AIR FORCE SUPPORT FOR CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS by Lennie O. Edwards, Jr., USAF, 48 pages.

This monograph analyzes a recent study by the Air Force to establish an Air Battle Force (ABF) for projecting tactical airpower in peacetime contingency operations. This ABF would be a single unit, trained and equipped with several different types of aircraft for response to crises situations worldwide.

The monograph first discusses the use of the military instrument of power in contingency operations, where achieving political objectives relys more on influence than destruction of force. The early role of airpower in contingency operations is examined during the deployment of Task Force Bravo to Lebanon in 1958. Task Force Bravo was part of an Air Force contingency response force known as the Composite Air Strike Force (CASF). This operation highlights several issues involving airpower projection that remain relevant today.

Finally, the ABF concept is analyzed to determine its operational viability. Deployability, sustainability, flexibility, and command and control provide the four criteria for analysis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AIR BATTLE FORCE: AIR FORCE SUPPORT FOR CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

We are living in a time of great political change. The claim that the Cold War is over is gaining more support with each passing week. East Germany has held their first democratic elections, the Soviets have begun to pull troops out of Czechoslovakia, and Lithuania has voted for independence from the USSR. There is a growing perception in Europe and the United States that the Soviet threat has significantly diminished.

If this is true, we in the military must reexamine our role in U.S. defense as policy guidance changes. The reduction in the Soviet threat could easily place greater emphasis on regional threats. The regional threat issue that has received the most publicity lately is the U.S. role in contingency operations, especially as a result of U.S. success in Operation Just Cause in Panama. As the old "East-West" tensions

continue to ease, and the probability of significant U.S. force reduction becomes more certain, the military must plan for the increased likelihood of participation in contingency operations.

This monograph is primarily concerned with the application of airpower, particularly the Air Force portion of airpower, in peacetime contingency operations. These contingency operations are ..."politically sensitive military activities normally characterized by short-term, rapid projection or employment of forces in conditions short of war."1 Peacetime contingency operations is one of the four Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) operational categories.2 The Air Force is trying to better define its role in these operations. In particular, the Air Force is looking at the concept of a single unit, trained and equipped with several different types of aircraft for response to crises situations worldwide. This notional unit is called an Air Battle Force (ABF).3 The purpose of this monograph is to determine if operational considerations of applying airpower in contingency operations warrant the establishment of an Air Battle Force.

As a starting point, the monograph will examine the traditional role of the military instrument of

power as it applies to war in general and to contingency operations in particular. It will then evaluate the accomplishments of a similar unit, known as the Composite Air Strike Force (CASF), which existed in the late 1950's. This evaluation, along with a look at today's changing environment, will lead to an analysis of the ABF being contemplated by the Air Force. The ABF concept will be examined against the criteria of deployability, sustainability, flexibility, and command and control.

THEORY AND DOCTRINE

> The reason for war is always for political objectives. War, therefore, is an act of policy.4

The use of the military as an instrument of national power is evidenced throughout modern history. Nations establish national security objectives based on national interests. Within the U.S., a policy is then developed for applying each element of national power to achieve national objectives. These elements are defined as diplomatic and informational, economic, and military.5 These differ slightly from the five elements of national power studied at the Command and

General Staff College of political, economic, military, geographic, and national will. Here, political and national will are contained in diplomacy and informational. Geographic is not considered separately, but is an influencing factor in all the others. Once the policies are established for each of the elements of national power, they are combined to form a strategy for a particular area.6

Military strategy, as one component of the overall strategy for the region, will become predominant in time of general war. The role of military strategy, as described by B. H. Liddell Hart, is "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy."7 Likewise, Clausewitz clearly establishes the relationship between (national) policy and the military as an instrument of power in war:

> The political objective - the original motive for the war - will thus determine both military objectives to be reached and the amount of effort it requires.8

However, we must establish some relationship between the war described by Clausewitz and "war" in terms of a contingency operation to bring it in line with the object of this paper. Clausewitz's war that

tends toward the absolute seems well beyond the "peacetime" contingency operation or peacekeeping force where the introduction of force may be merely to "show the flag" or a show of resolve. However, the peaceful objectives of the use of military power here do not alter the linkage between national policy and military strategy.

> The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.9

> On the other hand, the less intense the motive (political object), the less will the military element's natural tendency to violence coincide with political objectives. As a result, war will be driven further from its natural course, the political object will be more and more at variance with the aim of ideal war (destruction of the enemy force), and the conflict will seem increasingly political in character.10

When war is limited or the application of force is limited by the nature of the contingency, this problem of variance is exaggerated. By definition, contingency operations are "short, no-notice, operations (which) ... potentially include a wide variety of military activities (with) specific, limited objectives" and are

characterized by short decision cycles.11 Thus, we have contingency operations as a form of limited war requiring limited objectives. Here, especially, the primacy of political control over the military must remain paramount. However, this type of conflict contains resistance to the natural tendency of war. The link between cause and effect of using military force to achieve political objectives becomes vague when the political objective is to "influence rather than destroy."12

In limited conflict, "when military policy and strategy lack the guideposts of limited and attainable objectives and become, in effect, ends in themselves, they cease to be controllable and predictable instruments of national policy."13 However, Clausewitz cautions against limited policy objectives in war by stating that ... "if policy is directed only toward minor objectives, the emotions of the masses will be little stirred and they will have to be stimulated rather than held back."14 Thus, the limited nature of contingency operations causes some significant politico-military problems.

These problems will, hopefully, be resolved during planning. Translating U.S. policy into military

objectives in contingency operations normally comes during the Joint Operation Planning System (JOPS) Crisis Action Planning (CAP) process. Crisis is defined as:

> ... a sequence of interactions between the governments of two or more sovereign states in severe conflict short of actual war, but involving the perception of a dangerously high probability of war.15

The CAP is a phased planning process that allows the military and Defense agencies to develop, recommend, and implement National Command Authority (NCA) decisions.16

In response to worldwid national security interests, the U.S. has sought to develop a strong, rapid-response conventional force for military response in crises situations. The force must be credible and the nation must have the political resolve to apply this force relative to our national interests.17

If military power must be applied, the subset of airpower would play a critical role. The U.S. recognizes that "the capability of air forces to deploy rapidly in crises adds to our ability to bring effective military power to bear in distant regions in contingencies."18 A different level of commitment and

resolve can be projected based on the type of force deployed into an area. The level of commitment and visibility of air forces generally falls between that of ground and naval forces.19

Four political purposes gained from military force represented by airpower in contingency operations are to send a signal, to show support for a particular nation, to deter an action by a nation, or to compel a nation to modify its actions.20 Signaling a U.S. position can be done by such actions as increased alert status and will probably not involve a deployment of aircraft. Support for a nation can be shown through signaling or may involve some type of deployment. Military assistance is a common means of showing support for a nation, but actual U.S. force deployment should not be ruled out. In order to actually deter an action, a credible force must exist. Therefore, the probability of depolyment is much higher to achieve this objective.

Two of the characteristics of airpower, flexibility and responsiveness, are valuable in achieving deterrence.21 Force will generally be needed to compel a nation to modify its actions. Analysis has shown that in U.S. force employment short of war, the

greatest success rate has been achieved when trying to reinforce a particular behavior with the application of minimum force levels.22

> The strongest contribution of Clausewitz to military theory - that war is an instrument of policy whose only purpose is to achieve a political objective - is least understood in the American military tradition. The American warrior isolates war from policy (and) pursues war as a crusade in a strategy of annihilation too little related to the peace which must follow.23

Developing a clear idea of the "peace which must follow" is particularly difficult with time and force level restrictions common in contingency operations. Here, (landbased) tactical airpower offers some unique characteristics that will help. Speed and range are two of the characteristics that translate into responsiveness.24 With aerial refueling, elements of tactical airpower can deploy in response to a crisis situation anywhere in the world in as little as forty-eight hours.25 Once deployed, tactical air gives the commander great flexibility to support political objectives through its stated missions of counterair, air interdiction, close air support, special

operations, airlift, aerospace surveillance and reconnaissance, and aerospace maritime operations.26

EARLY CONCEPT OF AIRPOWER IN A CONTINGENCY ROLE

With the U.S. still heavily involved in World War II, in April 1943, a study was conducted by Brigadier General O. A. Anderson, Assistant Chief of Staff Plans, to look at postwar force requirements for the Army Air Corps. He envisioned a highly mobile, "international military force" consisting mostly of air to respond to situations around the world. He concluded that mobility would come from air, with "surface forces" to provide security and logistics support and temporary garrison capability. The purpose of this force would be to deter aggression, and its main offensive weapon was to be the heavy bomber.27 This was neither a new concept or a new weapon of choice for the Air Force, who was then presenting strategic bombardment as a means of winning the war in Europe. However, one outcome of the study did foretell an issue that still persists today. General Anderson's work caused him to take the first serious look at the basing requirements that would be needed for the postwar peacekeeping

force.28 It will be evident later in the analysis that this is still an issue of primary concern for projecting landbased airpower.

Ten years later, in the aftermath of the Korean Conflict, President Eisenhower issued NSC 162, which resulted in the policy of containment with nuclear weapons forming the basis of military strategy.29 In response, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) advanced the Sequoia Plan. It proposed a reduction in forward deployed conventional forces and a "mobile strategic reserve" in the U.S. composed primarily of Air Force strategic bombers.30 Later, picking up the title "massive retaliation," this new military strategy was intended to deter nuclear aggression by the communist world. The Composite Air Strike Force (CASF) was created in early 1955 within the framework of this strategy to respond to the increased threat of communist aggression outside the Soviet Union.31 The CASF would deter a small war just as Strategic Air Command would deter a major war.32

Integral to this idea of deterring small wars was the concurrent thought that tactical nuclear weapons would be used as a normal part of any future conflict. The CASF was the means of delivering these weapons.

Thus, the three factors leading to the development of the CASF were the policy of "massive retaliation," the idea of "limited war" resulting from the Korean War, and the newly developed capability to deliver small atomic bombs by fighter aircraft.33 It was believed that: "With this capability to move strike units thousands of miles in a matter of hours, the United States could, for a relative minor investment, hold a small force in readiness at a central location and cover the trouble spots of the world, rather than attempt to station and support expensive forces throughout the various areas."34

Reliance on nuclear at the expense of conventional forces under the Eisenhower Administration was largely a budgetary consideration. Saving money was a major factor in the creation of the CASF and will significantly impact on the current concept being studied by the Air Force.

Following approval in March 1955, the 19th Air Force was created at Foster Air Force Base, Texas, as a planning headquarters to "plan for, deploy, and exercise operational control of composite air strike forces in any area of the world where local war might

occur."35 The official mission of the Nineteenth Air Force was to:

> ... provide Tactical Air Command with a specialized and highly versatile command element capable of: Deploying with appropriate tactical forces for combat action to any area of the world, assuming operational control of units attached by Commander, Tactical Air Command, for participation in exercises, maneuvers, and other operations as required. The attached units may include tactical bombardment, fighter-bomber, fighter-day, air refueling, tactical missile, combat airlift, reconnaissance, and associated control and communications and support units.36

Significantly, the Nineteenth Air Force owned no aircraft, but was primarily a planning staff that would deploy with the CASF units. It was a subordinate unit of Ninth Air Force, with a back-up staff capability at Twelfth Air Force. This small staff contained only about 100 people. (See figure 1.) There were 15 officers in plans and operations while the remainder served in logistics, intelligence, communications, and administration. The concept of operations for the CASF included three phases: notification of designated units, movement to the conflict area, and conduct of operations in the conflict area.37 Four days after

notification the CASF would be mission capable in the deployed location.38 During the final phase, the Nineteenth Air Force commander would function as the air component commander of a joint task force or as the Theater Air Commander.39

During the early years of the CASF, emphasis was placed on operational and logistics planning and concept and capabilities testing.40 The first test of the concept was conducted in September 1956 when a deployment was made from the U.S. to Europe in Exercise Mobile Baker. A token CASF of about three squadrons of aircraft and support equipment deployed using a combination of air refueling and "island hopping."41

Following three years of planning and training, the true concept test came in July 1958, when tensions in the Middle East ignited into crisis. A year earlier, President Camille Chamoun of Lebanon had been the only head of state in the Middle East to ascribe to the new "Eisenhower Doctrine" offering military and economic assistance to help any country resist communist aggression. As his government weakened and tried to maintain order, he mentioned to the U.S. Ambassador that he may need U.S. help. When King Faisal and Crown Prince Abdul Illah of pro-Western Iraq

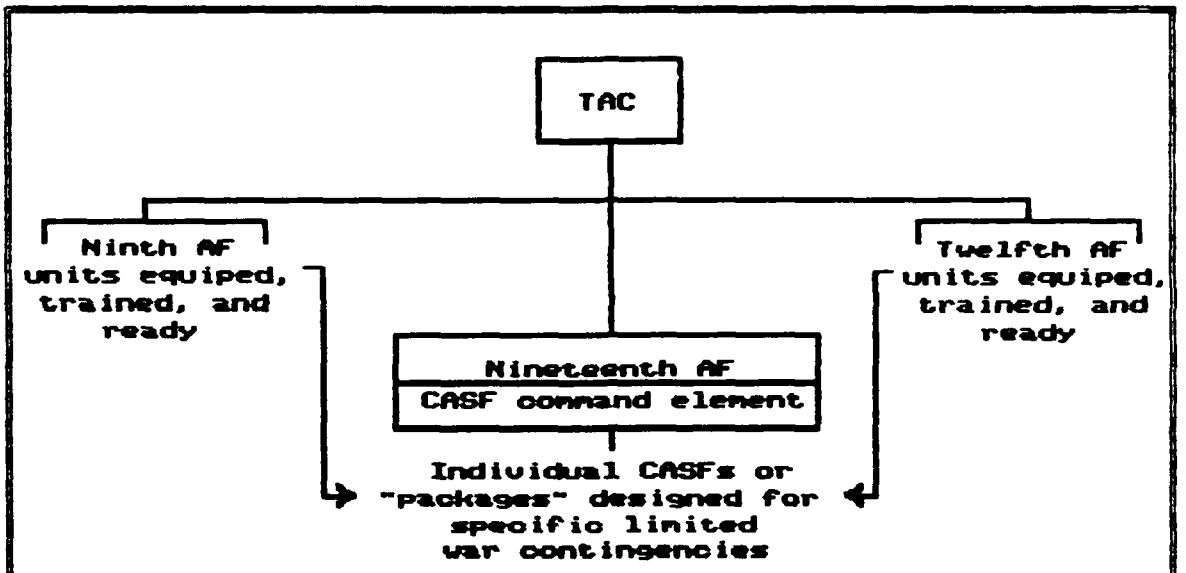

Figure 1: The Tactical Air Command Composite Air Strike Force[42]

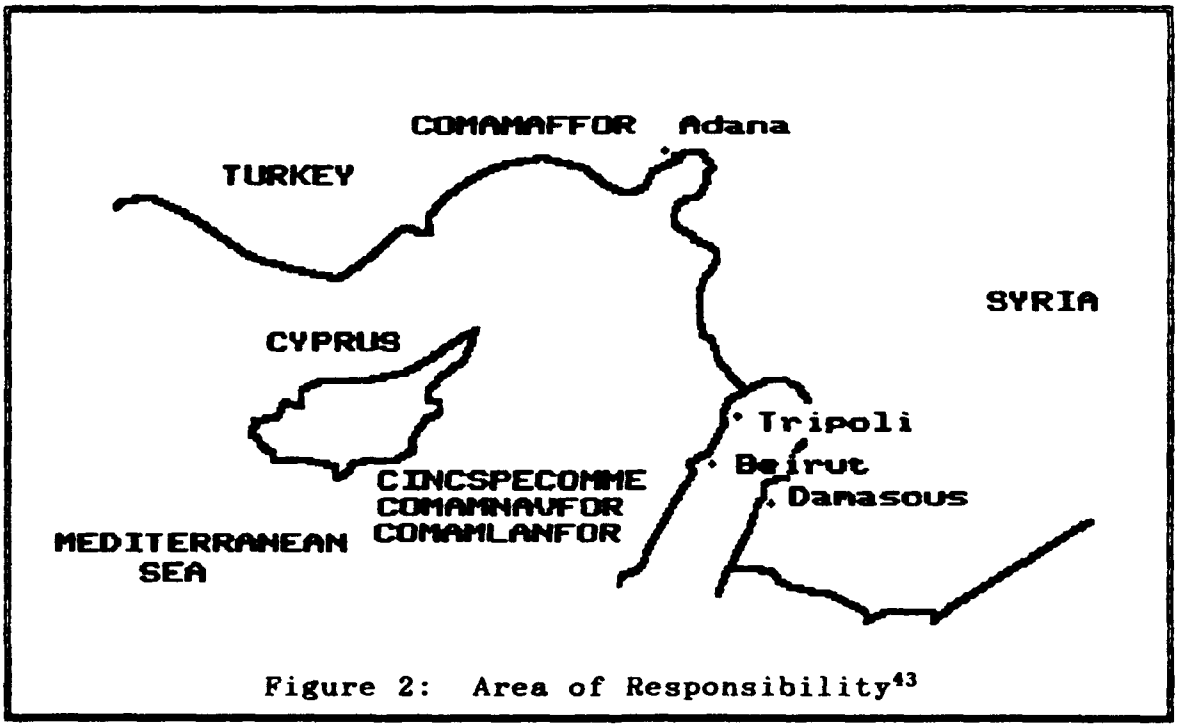

Figure 2: Area of Responsibility[43]

were assassinated on 14 July, President Chamoun immediately asked for U.S. military intervention, concerned that he would be the next Middle Eastern leader to fall. He insisted that help arrive within forty-eight hours.44

On 15 July 1958, CASF Bravo received a deployment order from Tactical Air Command, in response to the worsening situation in the Middle East. A force consisting of the command element, fighter, fighter-bomber, bomber, tanker, transport, and reconnaissance supported by command, control and warning aircraft was ordered to deploy to Incirlik Air Base near Adana Turkey.45 (See map at figure 2.)

Lebanon's request for help from the U.S. on 14 July was unexpected. In response, President Eisenhower directed a Marine amphibious assault at 0900 Eastern Daylight Time (1500 Beirut time) on the 15th. Early on the 15th he informed Congress of his decision stating that:

> United States forces are being sent to Lebanon to protect American lives and by their presence to assist the Government of Lebanon in the preservation of Lebanon's territorial integrity and independence, which have been deemed vital to United States national interests and world peace.46

Air support for the operations in Lebanon could come from three possible sources. First, and the primary option, was the CASF, which had been designed for this purpose. Second, tactical air assets could be sent from United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE). These forces could hopefully be there in less time because of the shorter deployment distance, but their commitment would reduce the forces in Europe. The third possibility was to get air from either or both of the two Navy carriers operating in the Mediterranean, the Essex and/or the Saratoga. However, no Air Force aircraft could respond in time to support the short notice amphibious operations. In addition, aircraft from the Essex would have to be sent ahead of the carrier to stage off land until the carrier arrived in the area of operations. Even then Navy aircraft would not arrive until two hours after the Marine landing.47

The objective in Lebanon was to support and assist the government of Lebanon in maintaining or restoring order.48 Early military objectives of the amphibious operation were to secure the airfield and port of Beirut, and the air was to provide transport, air superiority, close air support (CAS), and reconnaissance.49 In order to analyze how well the air

portion of the operation accomplished its limited operational objectives, I will break down the operation into its three phases according to the original CASF concept of operations and then look at lessons learned.

Beginning with the notification phase, Tactical Air Command received word of deployment around midnight on the 14th of July, but due to the planned Marine landing, was directed to hold the information "closest" so it would not compromise the amphibious operation.50 With these instructions, TAC did not immediately notify CASF participating units.

During the movement phase, two CASF designated F-100 squadrons, located at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, were unable to make their necessary night takeoffs due to restrictions from runway repairs.51 Night takeoffs were required to meet air refueling and arrival times into Adana, Turkey. Therefore, around 0900 (Eastern Daylight Time) on the 15 of July, as the Marines were landing in Lebanon, two "alternate" squadrons of F-100s from Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina were substituted. All Air Force aircraft, except some from USAFE that were added to the deployment departed on 15 July.52 The arrival sequence, including the arrival of Navy aircraft from

the aircraft carrier Essex, which arrived on the night of 15 July, is shown in Figure 3. In addition, by 1600 on the 15th, Task Force Alpha, one of the Army contingents, was loaded on aircraft at airfields in Germany, near Munich, and departed the next morning to arrive at Adana on the morning of the 17th. By the 17th of July, Adana airfield was saturated with 147 aircraft. Worse yet, most of the combat aircraft and about half their transport were still enroute.53

During the execution phase, air came under the command and control of Commander Specified Command Middle East (COMSPECOMME) who flew in from London. He commanded the CASF through the Nineteenth Air Force command element which had deployed from the United States. Air missions flown were mass fly-bys, leaflet drops, airlift, and reconnaissance. In addition, aircraft were maintained on air defense alert.54

A number of lessons were learned during the three phases. During phase one, notification time proved to be a problem. The short notice request and the security attached to the deployment notification added to the delay of air arriving and the Marines landing without air support. This showed the need for a standard joint alerting system.55

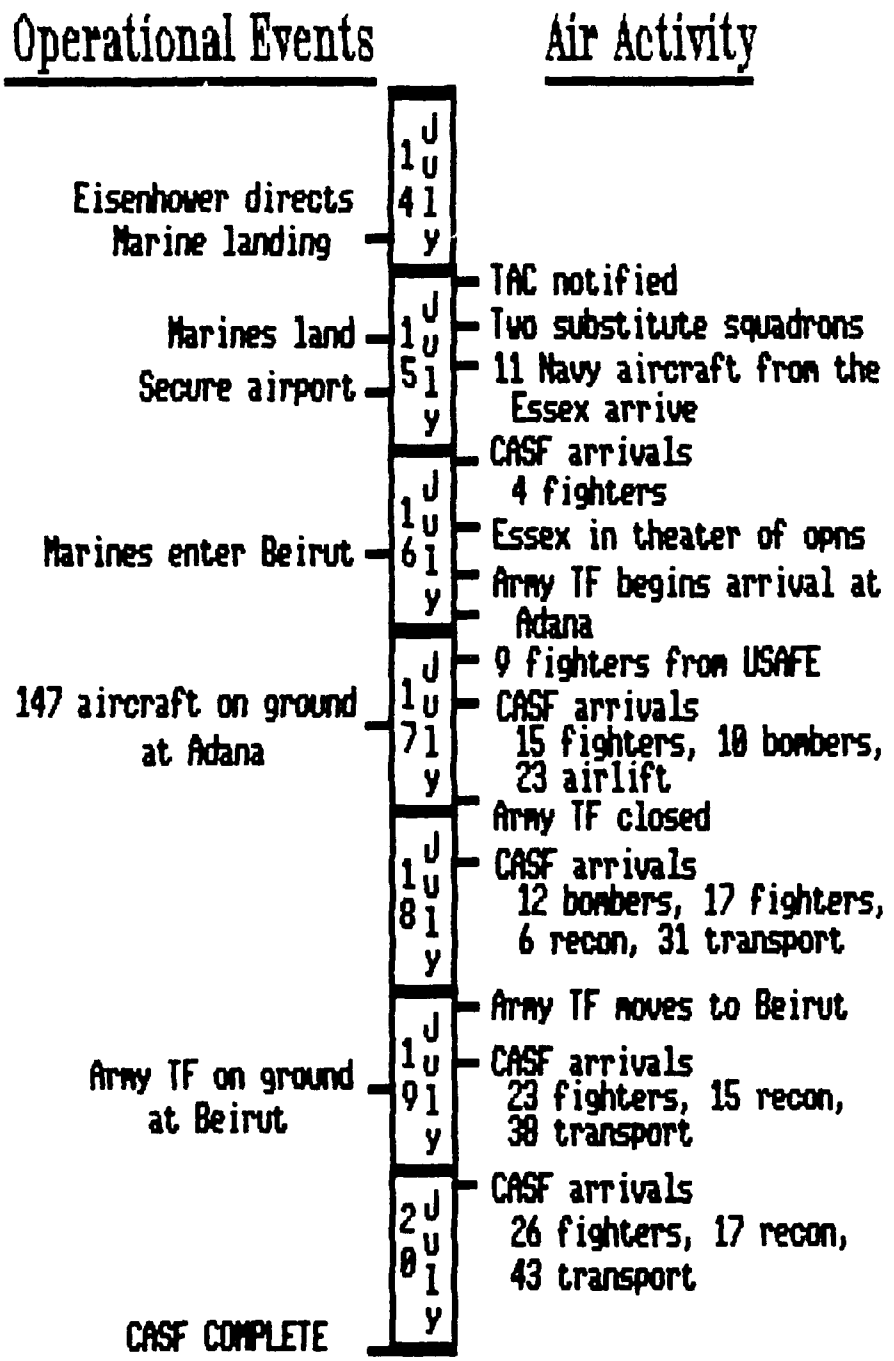

Figure 3: Arrival of Airpower into Lebanon Theater[56]

During phase two, the movement of air forces revealed some deficiencies. First, the tactical elements began arriving before the command element. In addition, it had been assumed that basing and overflight rights would be available when, and if, the CASF deployed. However, this was not the case and flight routes had to be changed to meet these political constraints. Also, the single operating base at Adana proved to be a bottleneck. This was only relieved by the rescheduling of aircraft arrivals, the redeployment of Task Force Alpha (Army contingent) to Beirut airport once the airfield there had been secured, and the cancellation of some units scheduled to deploy to Lebanon.57

A number of lessons were learned during the employment phase, even though there was no "war." The first lesson of this phase resulted directly from the movement phase. It was the piecemeal arrival of airpower into the theater of operations.58 Figure 2 has already shown that the aircraft arrived over a five day period following the Marine landing. The command element of Nineteenth Air Force did not depart until midnight on the 15th of July, 24 hours after notification.59 Eleven Navy aircraft (seven attack and

four fighters) arrived shortly after H-hour. By the next morning the Essex had arrived and its aircraft could support land operations in Lebanon. Only four CASF aircraft were at Adana at this time. Significantly, at the conclusion of the forty-eight hour claimed response time of the CASF, only thirteen Air Force aircraft were on the ground in the area of operations.60

On 17 July still no reconnaissance aircraft were available. Yet there was a critical need for good reconnaissance before the arrival of the Army assault force.61 Also, the secrecy of the deployment contributed to some of the sequencing problems when the two squadron substitution was made. This caused two additional problems that became evident in the execution phase. First, the pilots of the two non-CASF squadrons had not been sufficiently trained for this type of mission. They were only partially trained in the task of aerial refueling that would be required for the deployment. Second, although qualified in nuclear weapons delivery, the pilots were not adequately trained in the employment of conventional weapons.62 Although these pilots were fully qualified in the primary nuclear mission embodied in the concept of the

CASF, that was not the situation that presented itself in Lebanon. As a result of inadequate pilot training, a large number of training missions were flown in Turkey to improve crew readiness.63

In addition to inadequate training for the mission, several of the units arrived with incomplete flyaway kits which should have contained the necessary sustainment items to keep the aircraft flying for thirty days.64 This would add increased strain on the resupply system to make up for the missing items. Operational readiness rates would have been significantly reduced if a major combat situation had developed.

Another shortfall, and perhaps the one with the most potential for disaster, was the single operating base at Adana, Turkey for both Army and Air Force operations in the early days of the crisis. This presented a vulnerable target, added to supply shortages of critical items and added pressure to secure Beruit airport early in order to relieve the pressure at Adana.65

There were also some joint lessons learned between the Air Force and the Navy. Throughout the operation, the Navy controlled all naval air which generally

supported the Marines. Likewise, the Air Force air was controlled by the Air Force and primarily supported the Army. Although "cross-tell ties" or liaisons were established, coordination of missions was a problem during the operation.66

Following all the analysis of the CASF's ability to respond to crisis in another part of the world, it is interesting to note what Major General Viccellio, the Nineteenth Air Force commander proposed as future needs of the CASF. First, he saw the need to reduce airlift requirements which would increase the mobility of the CASF. Second, he envisioned a modern tanker force to support the CASF deployment. Third, he anticipated the developing technologies of vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) and short takeoff and landing (STOL) aircraft would greatly increase the capabilities of the CASF to operate from austere locations around the world. While these are technological issues, the next two requirements would have a more direct impact at the operational level. General Viccellio saw the need for the Air Force to place the proper emphasis on limited versus general war, and he proposed more clearly defined rules of engagement for the employment of the CASF.67

However, the Nineteenth Air Force and the CASF as an independent response force, were not to survive past the early 1960s. Following the Soviet launch of Sputnik, U.S. military strategy was refocused on strategic stability in the "missile age."68 Nuclear weapons were gradually delinked from the strategy for limited war, and the need for a joint response force for contingencies was realized with the organization of Strike Command.69 The new defense policy of "flexible response" emerged. There was still interest in small wars, but more in the line of wars of liberation and unconventional warfare for which a nuclear capable CASF was not needed.70

TODAY AND TOMORROW

> Where foreign policy is most in doubt, strategy is least active.71

The basis around which the U.S. develops its national strategy is the threat. Since World War II the predominant threat to U.S. interests has been the Soviet Union. However, world events have been changing our perceptions significantly over the past year to the point where William Webster of the Central Intelligence

Agency, testified before Congress that the Soviet Union is no longer a threat to the U.S.72 The dynamics created by all the changes have led the President to delay publication of this year's National Security Strategy of the U.S. until a clearer picture of the world situation emerges.73

With this framework shrouded in fog, the military is trying to readjust. What is recognized as increasingly important is the threat of regional conflict as expressed by several of the unified commanders. General James J. Lindsay (USA), Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command cites ..."a new array of emerging national and regional power groupings."74 Thirteen ongoing regional conflicts within CENTCOM alone and the importance of oil coming from that region may make this area the most likely area of conflict in the future.75 Reorienting away from the Soviet Union and toward regional conflict as the primary threat to U.S. interests will require a change in policy. Current U.S. defense policy calls for "... nations involved to provide for their own defense..." in military contingencies that do not involve the Soviet Union.76

The U.S. response to regional conflict will predominately result from crises situations, which places a much greater premium on contingency planning and the ability to execute "peacetime" contingency operations effectively. The practice of operational art in peacetime contingency operations will be affected by the greater influence politics will play in the planning, including the need to have communications directly to the highest national command level as the crisis progresses. In addition, military objectives will have to be chosen that can satisfy strategic or operational end states thus achieving political objectives without combat. However force may be used if necessary. Also, the need to accomplish the objectives in minimum time will place increased pressure on the military to respond quickly and efficiently.

In August, 1988, Secretary of the Air Force, Donald B. Rice, and Air Force Chief of Staff, General Larry D. Welch, tasked the Air Staff to look into future roles of the Air Force, primarily Tactical Air Command, in contingency operations. Given a future world with less forward deployed U.S. forces, the stated objective of the Special Study Group was to

..."craft Air Force units for likely contingency operations...in a constrained fiscal environment and evolving geopolitical changes."77

The study focused on the responsiveness of tactical airpower in contingency operations and ultimately proposed an Air Battle Force (ABF) as a force structure improvement over the current Air Force structure. The proposed ABF organization would offer a "cohesive warfighting structure" capable of providing counterair, interdiction, CAS, reconnaissance, C3I, refueling, airlift, and space assets for use in a contingency operation.78

The unit would have about 100 tactical aircraft to provide the traditional tactical air missions. Support aircraft would augment the unit upon deployment to provide C3I, refueling, and airlift. One of these notional units could be stationed on the east coast of the United States and a second in Alaska to cover worldwide U.S. commitments.79 A unique aspect of the ABF is that the primary aircraft and sustainment would be integrated into the same organization. Deployment size would be based on the situation and could range from a "package" as small as ten aircraft to the entire ABF in preplanned increments.80

In developing the ABF concept, the study group concentrated its analysis on the deployability and organization needed by airpower to better respond to worldwide contingency operations.81 In the area of deployability, the group identified several problems with the current system. Two of these problems result from the fact that the aircraft in a "force package" generated for applying airpower in a contingency operation come from many different locations. For example, in a typical Southwest Asia scenario, aircraft and support assets may come from nine different locations. The first problem this creates is a complex process for building a tailored package for each contingency requiring much detailed coordination. This leads to difficulties coordinating the movement because the package is not sourced from a single location. Another problem with deployability under the current system is that there is not much opportunity for deployment training even though units have a requirement to practice deployment annually. The final problem is that current deployments are planned for "peacetime quality of life in combat situations."82 As an example, the air package in support of the Southwest Asia scenario mentioned earlier would take 272 C-141s

to deploy under current guidance (See figure 4).83 Most of these sorties are for support equipment. However, by changing the guidance and deploying with the minimum essential items for a fifteen day operation instead of thirty days, the total number of C-141 sorties necessary could be reduced by more that half.84

The other area of analysis for the study group was organization. Beginning with the fact that U.S. force design has been shaped based upon the Soviet threat in a central European scenario since World War II, the group looked at what force design could alleviate some of the deficiencies of the current structure.85 In addition, the following contributing deficiencies in conducting contingency operations were noted: Units with unique capabilities are separated from those they support; centralized planning is required to make the system work; there is no single person responsible for planning and deploying a contingency force; and elements of the "package" will probably fight together for the first time without the benefit of first training together.86 The ABF offers an alternative force structure that alleviates these organizational deficiencies.

AIRLIFT REQUIREMENTS

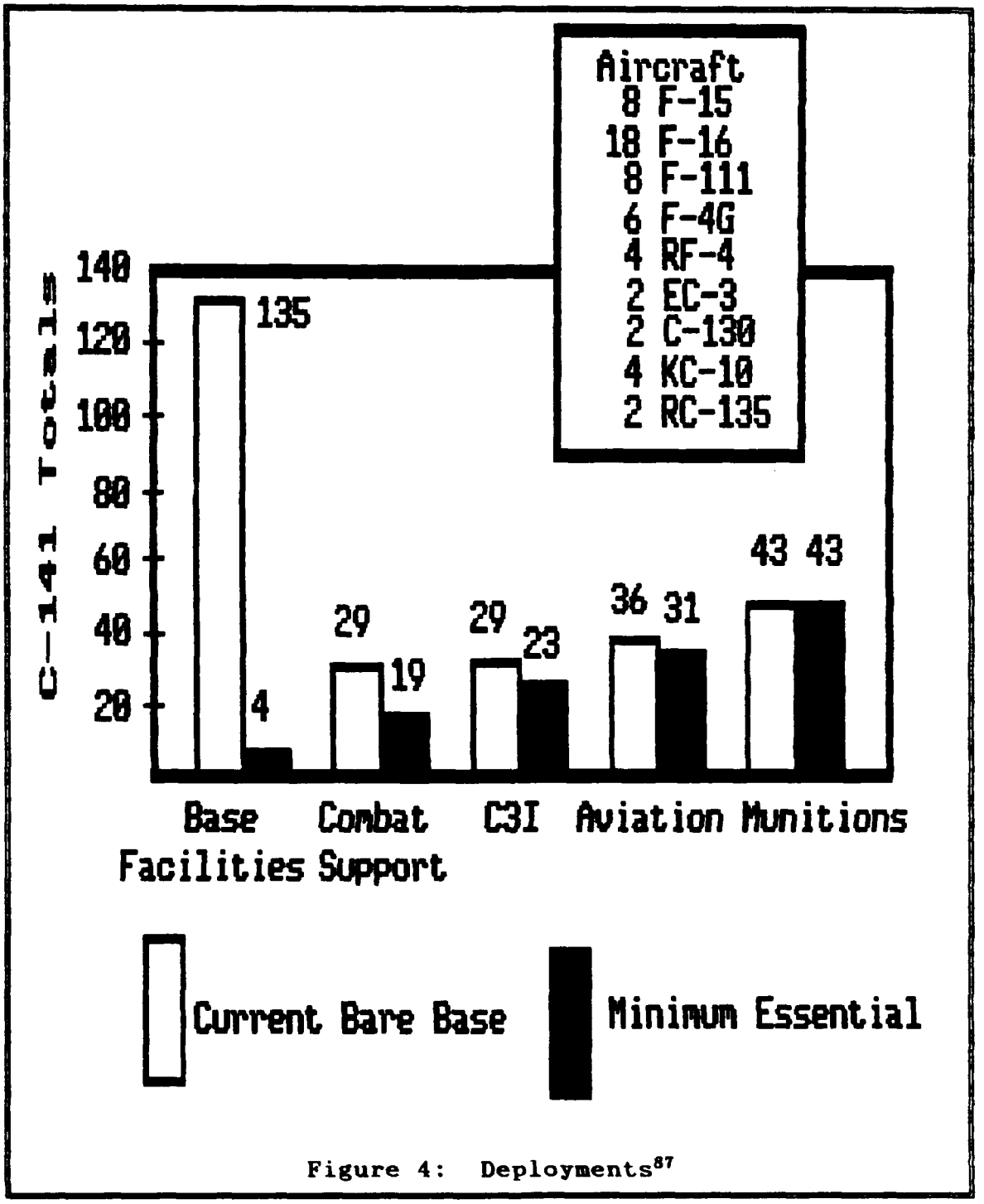

Figure 4: Deployments[87]

ANALYSIS

From the perspective of the 1950s concept of a Composite Air Strike Force to the ABF concept, the Air Force would like to offer a "force of choice" for the National Command Authority (NCA) in response to contingency operations. This is true even though airpower would almost always be part of a joint response. It is important to offer the NCA and theater commander the greatest latitude by assessing the capabilities of the ABF against the four criteria of deployability, supportability, flexibility, and command and control.

The critical element of deployability for a force in a crisis situation is response time. The time it takes to deploy into a theater of operation will even influence the type of force, including service specific forces, which are chosen. An ABF would have a deployment time similar to that of current USAF units. It is expected that an ABF package consisting of approximately thirty-five aircraft would have bombs on target forty-eight hours plus transit time from notification.88 Transit time is flight time from home station of the ABF in the United States to the area of operations. The entire ABF of approximately ninety-six

aircraft could be completely deployed and ready for missions ninety-six hours plus transit time from notification.89

Although response time has not significantly changed, the actual movement would be much smoother with most resources coming from one location. Much less movement coordination would be required to make the deployment happen and the "package" for both aircraft and support could be drawn from one of several preplanned deployment configurations based on the situation and response deemed appropriate by the NCA.

One of the major shortfalls in deployability during any projection of airpower into a remote theater is still present with the ABF concept. This shortfall is the limited ability of many areas to receive modern fighter aircraft because of inadequate airfields. Possible deployment locations are severely limited by the need for sufficient runway length to operate fighter aircraft (6,000 feet minimum), and the need for adequate ramp space for unloading cargo aircraft.90 Similar to the situation in Lebanon in 1958, most land based air support for an operation could have to operate from a single airfield. The congestion and security problems this creates may pose an unacceptable

risk. Operating from more secure bases located farther away from the crisis area may be necessary. However, basing and overflight rights may be a requirement for operations from these locations. In addition, aerial refueling would likely be required, but this reduces the number of sorties per day each aircraft can fly and increases the aircraft and support requirements for the operation. The nature of the theater may allow for better airpower projection from Navy carriers.

The benefit to deployability that is gained by reducing the size of the initial support sent with the deploying force may be offset by sustainment problems created if the contingency lasts longer than expected. The off-the-shelf support "packages" integral to the ABF would focus initial sustainability on short duration operations only. Going "light" would require follow-up with additional support if the duration of the operation increased. Sixty days was proposed as a cutoff for initial planning.91 This would also be less than the ninety-day limit on the President for commitment of U.S. forces without Congressional approval.

In order to sustain such an organization, the ABF home station support organization would be

significantly larger than the current Air Force wing organization. Most of this increase in size would be due to the maintenance requirements of a unit composed of several different types of aircraft. However, there is increasing commonality of parts in newer Air Force fighter aircraft so overall sustainment requirements could be lowered. For example, the F-15C/D, F-15E, and F-16 use a common engine and most of the air/ground support equipment is the same. In addition, sustainment in some areas could be augmented by host nation support (HSN). This would require updating current site surveys into possible deployment areas. Some items could be prestocked, but for the most part, support assets would have to deploy with the unit.

Flexibility is "the ability to perform a variety of actions, to produce a wide range of effects and influences, and to adapt to changing circumstances and environments."92 This characteristic of airpower adds a valuable capability to the commander for achieving operational objectives in a contingency. Again, the objective may not involve combat, and the total flexibility offered by an ABF is more than just flexibility in combat. It also offers flexibility in planning. Detailed initial planning, usually joint,

combined with flexibility in an operation helps produce the synchronization needed for success throughout the operation.93

The ABF flexibility begins with its force design and composition. The force "package" of the ABF would contain aircraft capable of performing all of the tactical air missions needed by the theater commander. These include counterair, air interdiction, close air support, airlift, and reconnaissance. In addition, specialized tasks such as aerial refueling, electronic combat, and warning, command, control, and communications would be performed by aircraft integral to the ABF.

However, one of the inherent detriments to flexibility for airpower is still present with the ABF. That is the large "tail" required to support modern aircraft. It presents a lucrative target that must be secured with ground forces and air defense systems, and these are very difficult to relocate. Here, again, sea based airpower may offer more flexibility depending on the theater.

> In general, American expeditions (contingency operations) succeed or fail based upon mass, flexibility, and especially command and control.94

The ABF would facilitate more effective command and control of airpower by the joint force or theater commander. The command element that deploys with the force would be the expert on employment of the ABF. He would function as the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) or as an advisor in a theater where someone else was JFACC.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Air Force force structure for projecting landbased tactical airpower into crises situations has changed from its early design under the Composite Air Strike Force concept. The CASF deployment to Lebanon in 1958 proved the concept of worldwide deployability of tactical aircraft, but several problems surfaced. Proficiency of aircrews, deployment coordination, timely arrival of aircraft, overflight rights, and suitability of airfields in the conflict area are a few of these problems.

Today, U.S. response to crisis situations around the world may well include a higher probability of using military force than in the past. With the changing nature of the threat to U.S. national security

interests, a wide variety of responses must be available to the NCA. Airpower continues to offer a force with great capabilities to respond to contingency operations around the world in a relatively short amount of time.

The Air Force is reexamining the force structure for a contingency response force. The notional Air Battle Force has been proposed as an enhancement to current capabilities. As an organization that can provide single-source "packages" of both aircraft and sustainment for contingency operations, the ABF would increase operational capabilities. Deployability is increased by reducing the lift requirements, eliminating much of the required coordination, and ensuring a well trained force is conducting the operation. The "force packaging" idea would increase flexibility by offering a number of unit size and sustainment options to the operational level commander. In addition, the single unit concept enhances command and control and makes a single individual responsible for planning, training, and employment of the force.

Unfortunately, the ABF concept still has a major deficiency that was identified during the CASF era. This is the requirement for a major airfield from which

to operate modern Air Force tactical aircraft. This requirement will limit the full capabilities of the ABF and point to the use of Navy and Marine air as the primary means of projecting airpower into some theaters.

The Air Force needs to conduct more detailed study of the ABF concept. A proposal to establish a small unit consisting of the different tactical aircraft proposed for the ABF and evaluating the aircrews and unit at a Red Flag training exercise in Nevada is a step in the right direction.95 In addition, the ABF needs an aircraft with short or vertical takeoff and landing capability. This implys either procurement of this capability in the Air Force or making the ABF joint with the Marines.

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